



Charles R. Drew University
of Medicine and Science

Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in South Los Angeles to Open First and Only Historically Black Medical Degree (MD) Program West of the Mississippi

Program will Directly Impact Physician Workforce Diversity in California and Beyond

WILLOWBROOK, Calif. – October 18, 2022 / Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU) today announced the launch of the University’s first independent 4-year medical degree (MD) program after receiving notice of preliminary accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). The new program will be the first and only such program offered through a Historically Black institution west of the Mississippi and represents the culmination of a dream held by CDU’s founders, the surrounding community, and all the University’s subsequent leaders since it opened its doors in 1966.

Located in the heart of South Los Angeles, the home to more than 1 million residents and no MD programs, CDU is the second-most diverse university nationally in terms of student and faculty diversity. CDU is also one of only four U.S. Historically Black Medical Colleges and is a federally designated Historically Black Graduate Institution. The University is also a charter Hispanic Serving Health Professions Schools member as well as a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. Founded in the wake of the Watts Uprising with a vision of creating a world without health disparities, the new MD program is accepting applications for its charter class in July 2023 and will directly impact the diversity of the physician workforce in a time where currently more than half of all practicing physicians in the U.S. are white.

“This is a historic moment for CDU and our community, a moment when we make a significant stride towards our mission of cultivating diverse health professional leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations,” noted CDU President and CEO David M. Carlisle in an address to students, staff, faculty, and media on campus. “Our community, and in fact the entire western United States, has for too long been deprived of an MD program built from the ground up with diversity, equity, and inclusion fused into its very bones. No more. It is a great honor and achievement to announce to you today that CDU will finally remedy this once and for all.”

The new program will be offered through CDU’s College of Medicine, which along with the College of Science and Health and the Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing, make up the University’s three colleges. Instruction will initially take place in the College of Medicine’s current facilities on campus and will be relocated to a future state-of-the-art health professions education building on campus which is currently in the planning phase.

“The benefits of having more doctors of color in the mix are abundantly clear and supported by research. Doctors of color are more likely to practice in underserved communities, and patients of color have better health outcomes when attended to by a physician of the same ethnicity,” noted Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, Dean of CDU’s College of Medicine. “The successful accreditation and opening of this program after so much hard work by CDU staff and faculty is not just an amazing achievement, it’s a medical necessity that addresses the root cause of many inequities in healthcare.”

The CDU MD Program will join more than 20 undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and certificate programs currently offered by the University, and will draw from a 40-year history of partnering with UCLA to train future doctors through a joint MD program. The new independent CDU program will be the first Historically Black medical degree program to open anywhere in the US since 1981.

CDU has been fundraising for this program since before the application process began through its five year, \$75 million CDU Rising Campaign. Significant gifts and grants from individuals, institutions, and state budget allocations have been pledged or received in recognition of the valuable and positive impact the MD program will have on training doctors of color. With this preliminary approval, fundraising efforts will be accelerated to support the launch and evolution of this historic program, to secure scholarships for incoming students, and to bring a state-of-the-art building to house the program to the CDU campus.

“We are greatly appreciative of the many people beyond our University, including the community, local, state and federal government representatives, partners, and stakeholders, as well as the many dedicated professionals within CDU, who have contributed so much and labored so diligently for so long to bring this dream to a reality,” concluded President Carlisle. “The Mighty Lion spirit runs deep with the extended CDU Community and this success stands as proof that there is nothing we cannot achieve when we work together towards common goals and the greater good.”

Information about the new program and application instructions to join the July 2023 charter class of the CDU Medical Degree Program can be found at www.cdrewu.edu/cdumd

About CDU

Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU) is a private, nonprofit, community-founded, student-centered University committed to cultivating diverse health professions leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations through outstanding education, clinical service, and community engagement. CDU is also a leader in health disparities research with a focus on education, training, and treatment for cancer, diabetes, cardiometabolic, COVID, and HIV/AIDS. CDU was founded in 1966 in the unincorporated town of Willowbrook in the heart of South Los Angeles. CDU offers a range of undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs including nursing, x-ray technology, medicine, biomedical science, public health, computed tomography, physician assistant, and psychology.

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